

FULTON STREET REVITALIZATION

Submitted to:
The Redevelopment Agency of the City of Fresno

Prepared by:
ELS Architecture and Urban Design
SWA

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FULTON STREET REVITALIZATION

Fresno, California

Concept Design Study 2002
for the
Fresno Redevelopment Agency Board

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Past



Present



Future

PREFACE

In less than 150 years, Fresno has grown from a railroad station stop in the Central Valley to a city of more than 420,000 people. It is now the 6th largest city in California.

Faced with the City's continuing northern expansion and suburban development, the Fresno Redevelopment Agency, since 1961, has explored and implemented plans to strengthen the economic vitality of the downtown.

In May 2001, the City of Fresno retained ELS Architecture and Urban Design to provide market research and a new concept design for Fulton Mall and its surroundings. The following report briefly describes the history of the area, documents the study process and findings, and provides recommendations to revitalize this significant commercial district at the heart of downtown Fresno.

Urban design is a collaborative process. For every element of a successful project, there are city staff, property owners, merchants, architects, planners, developers, public committees and dedicated citizens — each of whom contributes special expertise and a commitment to support the revitalization effort. ELS thanks all of the participants in this concept design study, in particular, the project staff of the Fresno Redevelopment Agency and members of the Technical Advisory Committee who contributed their time, ideas, and historic perspective to the design and review process. Both groups are to be commended for their strong commitment to revitalize the commercial core of Fresno through new development, renovation and preservation.

Study participants are listed on the following page.

ELS would also like to thank the Fresno City and County Historical Society for their permission to use the black and white photographs reproduced from "A Portrait of Fresno: 1885 to 1985 Centennial Celebration Edition," December 1985.

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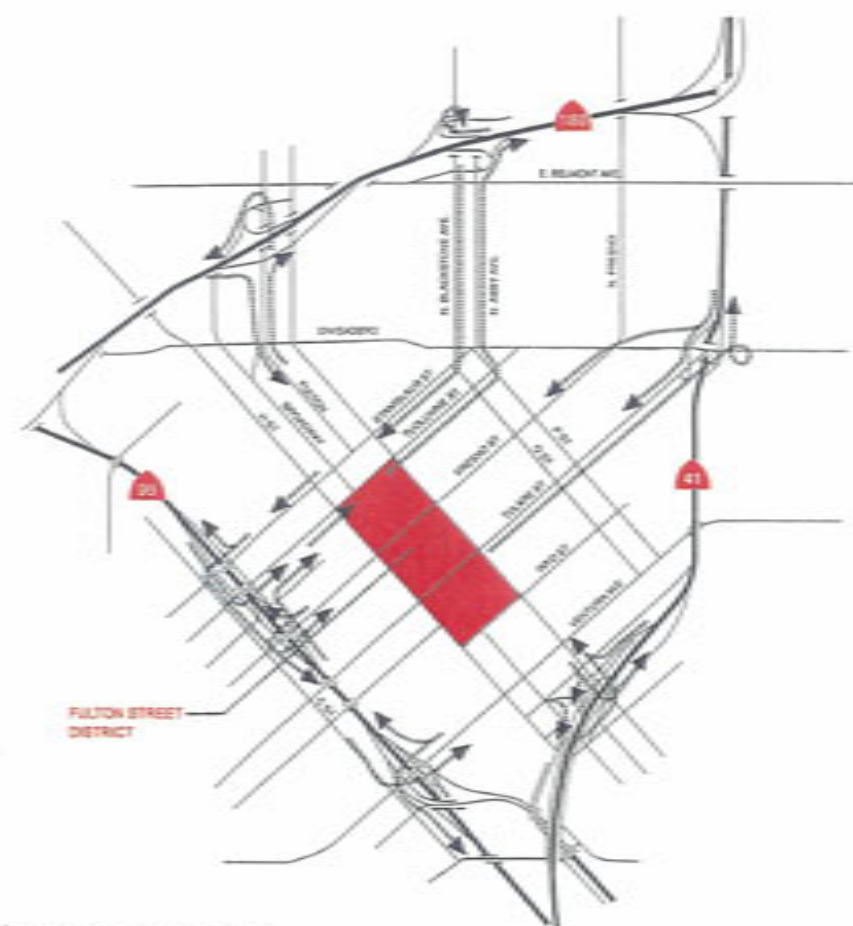
DTA: Downtown Association

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Central Valley of California.



"Central Area" of Fresno.



Fulton Street District and surrounding downtown districts.

STUDY AREA AND SCOPE

The City of Fresno occupies a strategic position in the center of the San Joaquin Valley, midway between Sacramento and Los Angeles, and less than two hours away from Yosemite National Park. While air travel and computer connections have replaced some automobile travel, Fresno has maintained its position as the business and cultural capital of central California. During the 21st century, the city will be tasked with providing increased business and entertainment opportunities for the expanding regional population.

The core downtown zone is referred to as the "Central Area". Over the years, the Central Area has expanded to include a triangle of 1500 acres bounded by three major freeways — 41, 99, and 180 — which provide easy access to and from the city center.

Most of the Central Area has been the subject of targeted redevelopment efforts since the early 1960s. This specific study area incorporates the historic commercial-retail core of Fresno and was declared the Central Business District Redevelopment Area in 1961. Following the creation of the Fulton Mall in 1964, this area has also been called the Fulton Mall Project Area. It encompasses 86 acres bounded by Tuolumne Street to the north, Van Ness Street to the east, Inyo Street to the south, and "H" and Broadway streets to the west.

Revitalization of this central commercial district and reuse of its historic buildings is essential to the success of surrounding development. To this end, ELS invited Gregory Stoffel & Associates to provide market research on present and future economic indicators for the study area. ELS, with SWA, prepared land use strategies for the entire study area, analyzed individual sections of the six-block long Fulton Mall, and proposed improvements to the streetscape.

To establish a recognizable destination, we have renamed the study area the **"Fulton Street District"**.

LEGACY
Past to Present

San Francisco Floral Company on Fulton Street from 1913 to 1966.





Mariposa Street looking west, c. 1910: Victorian buildings, filled with retail and commercial tenants, portray Fresno's early prosperity.



Intersection of Tulare and Fulton Street, c. 1910: Shaded pedestrian walkways shared the street with bicycles, horses, and automobiles.



Pacific Southwest Building, c. 1932: One of the many surviving high-rises built during the 1920s along Fulton Street.



Fulton Street, looking north from Tulare, 1915: Signage, street lights, awnings, and wide sidewalks defined the retail frontages.

HISTORIC FRESNO

Fulton Street and the Downtown

"Before the town was two years old, there were baseball teams, a brass band, Odd Fellow and Masonic lodges, and a social and literary club." [A Portrait of Fresno](#), Centennial History Committee, City of Fresno, 1985

In 1872, the Central Pacific Railroad established Fresno Station in a patch of green wheat fields in the middle of the arid San Joaquin Valley. Thirteen years later, a city of 3,000 was formally incorporated. Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, Fresno thrived as the commercial center of a prospering agricultural region. Good land encouraged many different ethnic groups to settle in the city. The downtown skyline became recognizable with its notable high-rise commercial buildings, many of which still stand along Fulton Street today.

As historic photographs show, downtown Fresno in its early heyday consisted of bustling sidewalks, a vibrant mix of street level retail with office tenants on upper floors, convenient parking, shaded arcades, a perceived mix of income levels and interests — all contributing to economic vitality.

Early Fulton Street ("J" Street until 1910) was at the heart of the economic boom. The Bank of Central California was operating at Mariposa and Fulton by the turn of the century; the Barton Opera House opened at the corner of Fresno and Fulton in 1890.

The Mariposa Street cross-axis leading east to the Fresno County Court House was established by the mid-1870s. By 1890, the transformation from small town to city was dramatically evident in Victorian-style buildings marching east up Mariposa to the formal landscaped Courthouse Park fronting Van Ness ("H" Street).

This was the legacy of many downtowns across America. Early prosperity established "Main Streets" and "Crossroads" that relied on the same mixture of uses and streetscape amenities that are successful today.

With a new downtown stadium, scheduled to host the Fresno Grizzlies baseball team in the summer of 2002, Fresno will continue a tradition that dates back to the town's earliest beginnings.



Fulton Street, Christmas, 1953.



Fulton Mall, 1965.

Downtown Decline and Urban Renewal

Downtown development in Fresno slowed significantly following the stock market crash of 1929 and during the Great Depression. Between 1940 and 1960, the city increased in population from 12,500 to 134,000, and both residential and commercial development expanded well beyond original city boundaries. But the city center did not share proportionally in this economic growth.

By the mid-1950s, it was apparent to city administrators that the central business district was losing major retailers and its economic standing. In the early 1960s, Victor Gruen Associates were retained to design a new concept plan for the entire Central Business Area; their approach was to revitalize the heart of downtown as a regional shopping center to counter suburban development. (Fresno's first two suburban malls, Manchester and Fig Garden, had opened in 1955 and 1956 respectively.) Emulating the suburban mall prototype, Fulton Street was converted into a six-block outdoor pedestrian mall, with some of the planned parking structures constructed behind it.

The opening of Fulton Mall in 1964 was acclaimed as one of the first revitalization efforts nationwide which attempted to reverse inner city decline. A year later, *Look Magazine* recognized Fresno as an "All-American City," however, by the early 1970s, it was apparent that the outdoor mall had failed to stem the exodus of department stores to the suburbs. Urban renewal efforts that accompanied the creation of the pedestrian mall razed many nearby historic buildings and configured the traditional street grid into dead-ends and loop roads allowing traffic to navigate around the mall. Development priorities shifted to adjacent office, light industry, and convention-related development.

The city continued to expand beyond the Central Area. By 1988, the population exceeded 305,000 and Fresno covered over 95 square miles. In 1989, the City of Eugene, Oregon, Planning and Development Department surveyed 35 cities that had built pedestrian malls; 18 had already been removed. Fresno's mall was described at that time as "doing poorly", with "downgraded retail." These conditions remained largely unchanged throughout the 1990s.

In 1992, as redevelopment efforts continued, the Ratkovich Company prepared a comprehensive revitalization plan for downtown Fresno. In 1995, the Downtown Association recommended that traffic be reintroduced to the mall. That same year, Fulton Mall was selected to be part of the California Main Street program which provides financial assistance for business attraction and commercial rehabilitation. And in 1999, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) completed a one-week intensive review of the entire downtown including the Fulton Mall.

The ULI report restated the recurring theme, "Able planners and experts have studied Fresno repeatedly but no comprehensive plan linking, leveraging, and implementing their recommendations and projects has ever been prepared." By that time, the Fulton Mall was seen as a "divider", separating rather than integrating redevelopment efforts on surrounding blocks.



The intersection of Mariposa and Fulton today.



Fulton Mall vacant and reused storefronts, 2001.



Mall amenities are randomly placed, distracting from rather than supporting commercial tenants.

FULTON MALL TODAY

"The mall is outdated, underutilized, and pocked with empty storefronts."
"Downtown Fresno, California," An Advisory Services Panel Report of the
Urban Land Institute December 5-10, 1999

Revitalization of the Fulton Mall area is long overdue. Over the past 13 years, it has been described as poorly maintained, poorly lit, unused at night, and unknown to many potential users, including nearby college students and north city residents. Vacant storefronts — with custom display cases and deteriorating terrazzo and marble finishes — are reminders of better times in the past.

There are Fresno residents who know and appreciate the Mall as a pedestrian environment with a series of distinctive water features, shade trellises, and distinguished sculptures. But the Mall is no longer a resource or popular destination for the larger community, and commerce is not adequately supported.

Across the country, the transformation of "Main Streets" in the 1960s to outdoor pedestrian malls was undertaken to shore up existing retail districts. Even where no other economic stimulus was provided, closed streets provided a new look and a sense of revitalization, often accompanied by outdoor family amenities including expanded seating and play structures. Despite these additions, in many cities, more affluent consumers sought greater convenience and greater retail diversity at the large new suburban centers.¹ Fulton Mall followed this pattern. The last of the department stores has moved out, and downtown retail establishments now cater largely to nearby city residents and to office workers at lunchtime.

Studies cite various overlapping reasons for pedestrian mall decline. Reduced retail sales and occupancies may parallel a general decline in the surrounding central business district. Malls may suffer further when surrounding business areas improve at the expense of the historic city core. The decline in retail choices and retail concentration as businesses relocate then adds to the continuing market decline². All of these factors have contributed to the lack of economic vitality in the Fulton Mall area today.

¹ Laurence O. Houstoun, Jr. "From Street to Mall and Back Again", Planning, June 1990.

² Ibid.

PUBLIC PROCESS

Meetings, August and October 2001.



Site Review, June 2001.



PUBLIC PROCESS

The ELS team held a series of public meetings to discuss the history and future of the Fulton Mall area, including past reports, existing conditions, public perceptions, desirable changes and important resources to be preserved. All of the meetings were attended by members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) appointed by the Fresno Redevelopment Agency. This group included building owners and tenants, and members of the Fresno Redevelopment Agency, Chinatown Revitalization, Fresno Revitalization Corporation, Council member Daniel Ronquillo's office, the Uptown Committee and the Downtown Association. Two meetings advertised to the public drew members of the arts community, private developers, interested citizens, and news organizations.

Summaries of each meeting may be found in the Appendix A.

At the beginning of the fourth meeting, ELS presented a summary of information and opinions gathered from the previous three meetings. These summaries were distributed as "What Our Research Found" and "What We Heard."

TAC members differed on whether to re-open all six blocks of Fulton Street to traffic. Based on market research, community information, and a review of successful shopping streets, ELS recommended re-opening the full length of Fulton Street to improve the economic climate and stimulate revitalization. Wide sidewalks and a civic plaza can support the existing art collection and other pedestrian amenities including the existing mature street trees and a variety of water features and seating areas.

Additional input from the community, at public meetings, provided strong opinions on several issues: raising quality standards is essential for storefronts and the streetscape; presentation of the art collection must be carefully thought out, and should involve the arts community; and the pedestrian character of Fulton Street must be preserved if the street is re-opened.

WHAT OUR RESEARCH FOUND

Market Research conducted by Greg Stoffel & Associates established the following criteria for revitalization of the Fulton Mall area:

- Cars = increased visibility and visits
- Demographics will support new tenants and increased sales
- Fulton Street must draw beyond a 10-minute driving radius (to attract per household income levels that will support revitalization)
- The mall is too long and too large — concentrate retail/entertainment uses on two of the three superblocks
- Destination tenants are required to support the stadium anchor; an entertainment anchor could be successful in this district.
- A "story" should be developed to promote the downtown
- Revised traffic patterns will support Fulton Street uses
- Parking must be signed and available

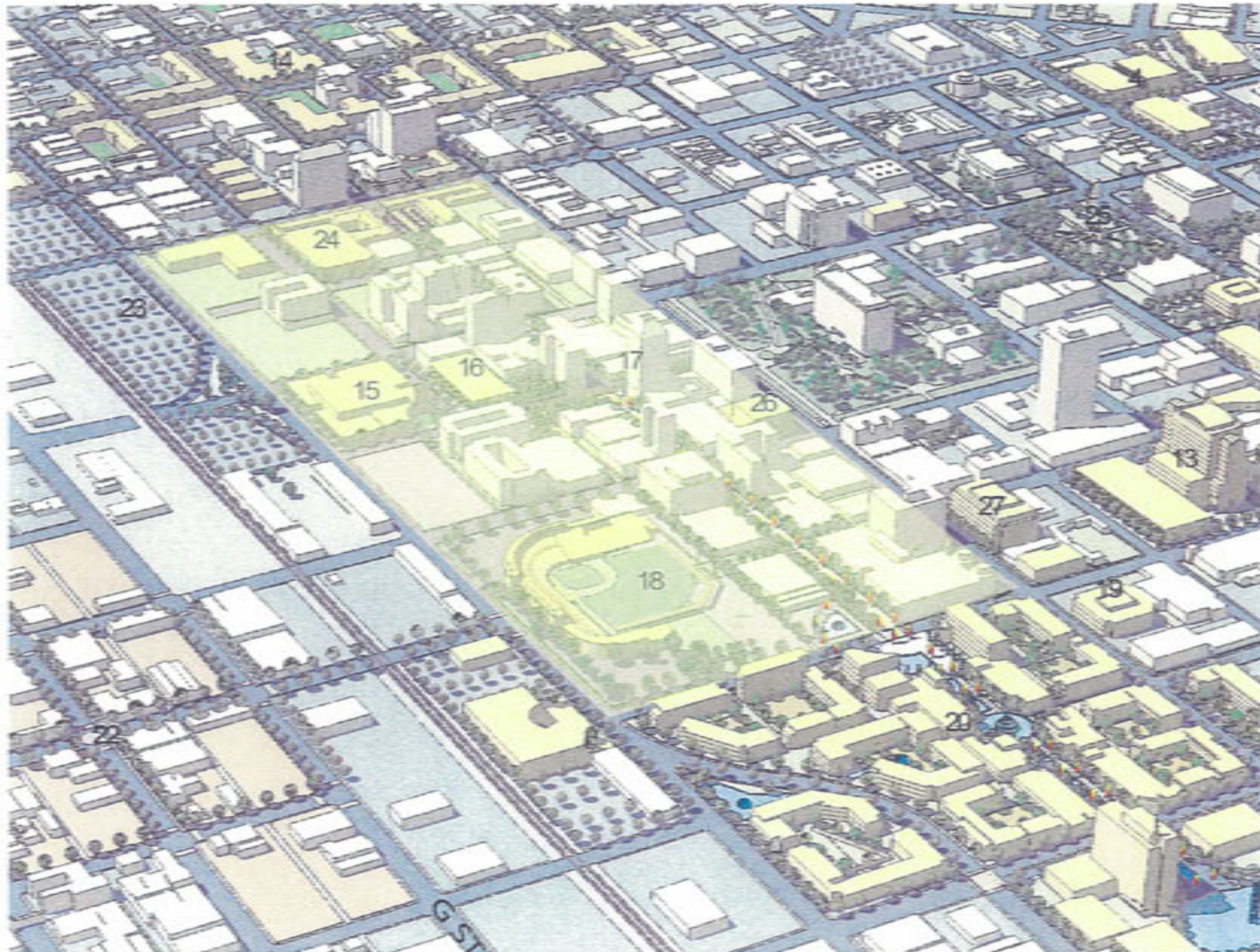
WHAT WE HEARD

A majority of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) agreed to the following goals for the streetscape improvements:

- Preserve mature trees
- Feature the public art
- Open the street to increase retail sales and improve quality of merchandise and storefront design
- Concentrate commercial uses between Fresno and Inyo
- Provide a central civic events space; close street occasionally
- Provide on-street parking, with no double parking allowed
- Recognize Fulton Street's architectural heritage — "look up"
- Support new mixed use development
- Create a new farmers market to capitalize on Fresno's legacy

THE CONCEPT DESIGN
Establishing the "Fulton Street District"





Partial view of "Vision 2010", a composite image prepared by A.C. Martin Partners and RDA to illustrate Fresno's action strategy for comprehensive redevelopment of the downtown. The Fulton Street District is highlighted.

THE LARGER VISION

"The key lesson that the experimentation with pedestrian malls provided was that public spaces, in order to be safe, appealing, and lively, must be multipurpose and ever changing." Downtown Fresno, California, an Advisory Services Panel Report, Urban Land Institute, December 5-10, 1999

Transformation of the Fulton Mall area into a vital and sustainable district will require revised traffic patterns; land use planning that supports new uses; quality storefronts and coordinated streetscape amenities that can continue to change over time.

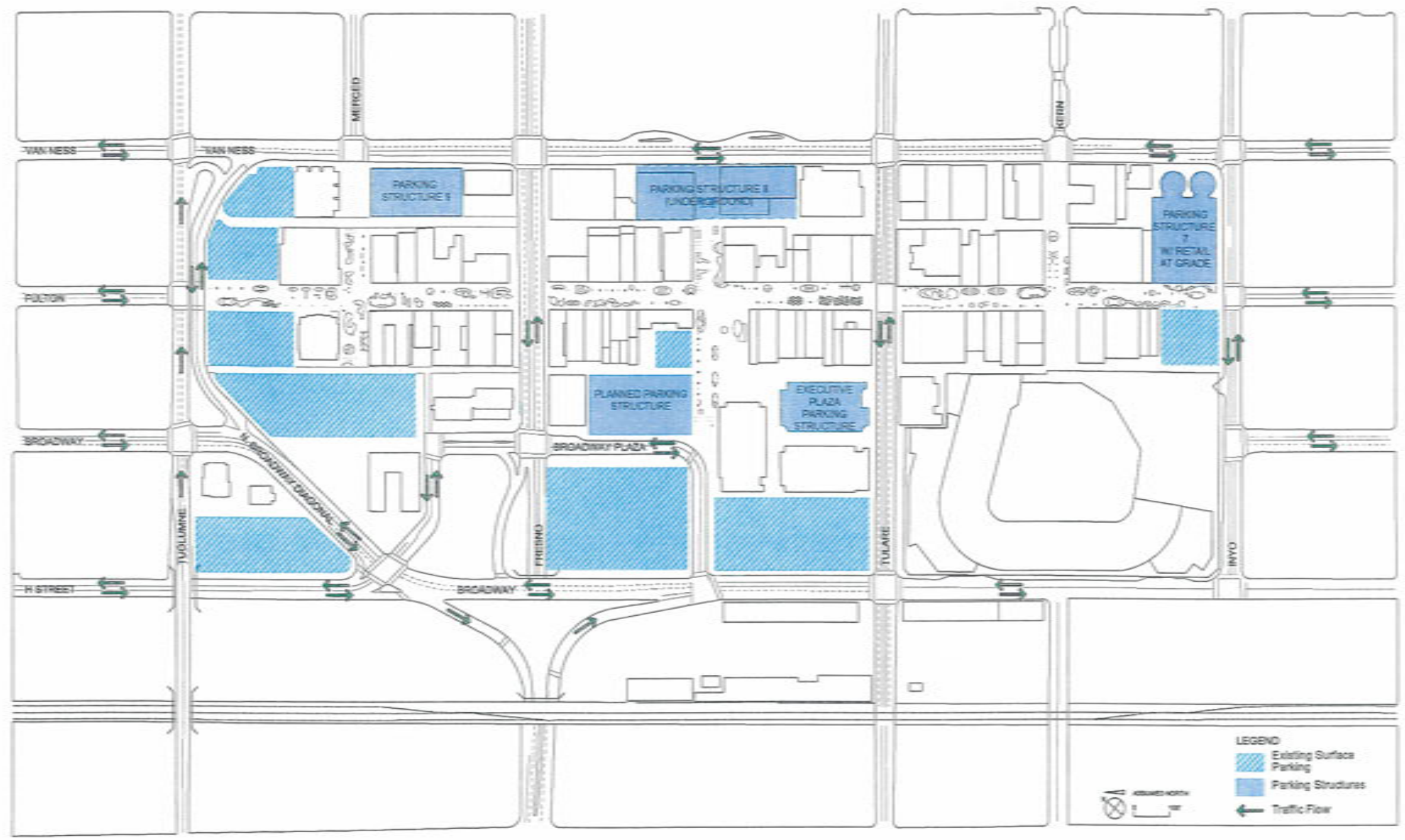
Improvements cannot be limited to the Fulton Street frontages. Revitalization measures must support development of contiguous blocks and adjacent side streets; provide ample nearby parking; and eventually create links to other downtown districts.

REMOVING BARRIERS — Revising Traffic Patterns and Supporting New Development

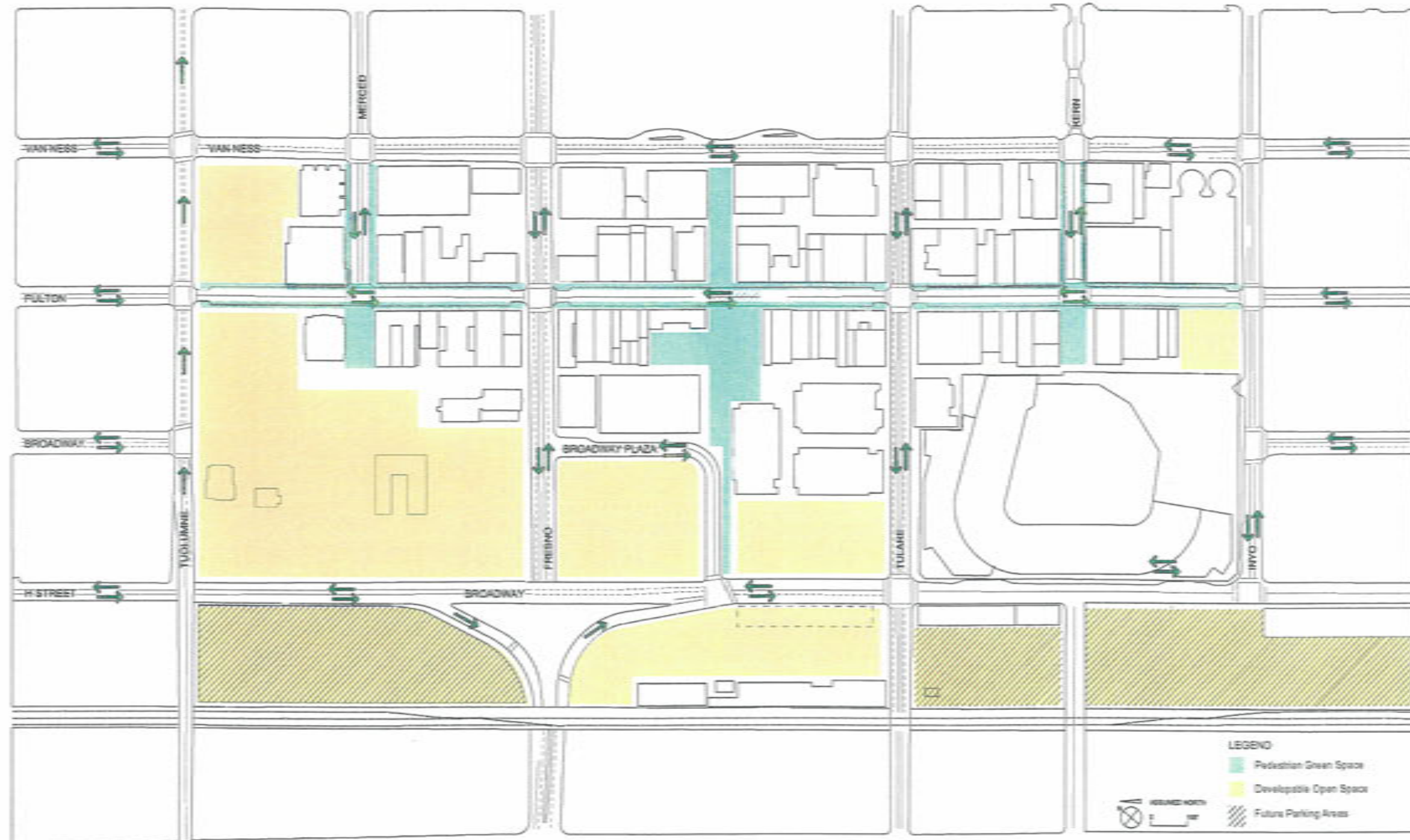
The most direct benefit for the Fulton Street District will be to improve traffic flow to, from, and within the District. Existing circulation requires vehicles on Fulton to detour at Tuolumne or Iryio. Routes in and out of the district are not standardized. Reestablishing a recognizable street grid will provide a straightforward route for residents and visitors who travel more than ten minutes to reach the downtown.

When the Mall was created, two diagonal streets were constructed in an attempt to ease traffic circulation around the mall perimeter. The south Broadway diagonal was eliminated when land was assembled for the new downtown stadium. The north Broadway diagonal and a two-way loop road parallel to Tuolumne still exist. These roads and the Broadway Plaza loop north of Fresno Street should be removed to accommodate significant land assembly and larger planned development between Tuolumne and Fresno. (See the Existing Circulation and Parking Diagram, and the Development Opportunities and Proposed Circulation Map which follow.)

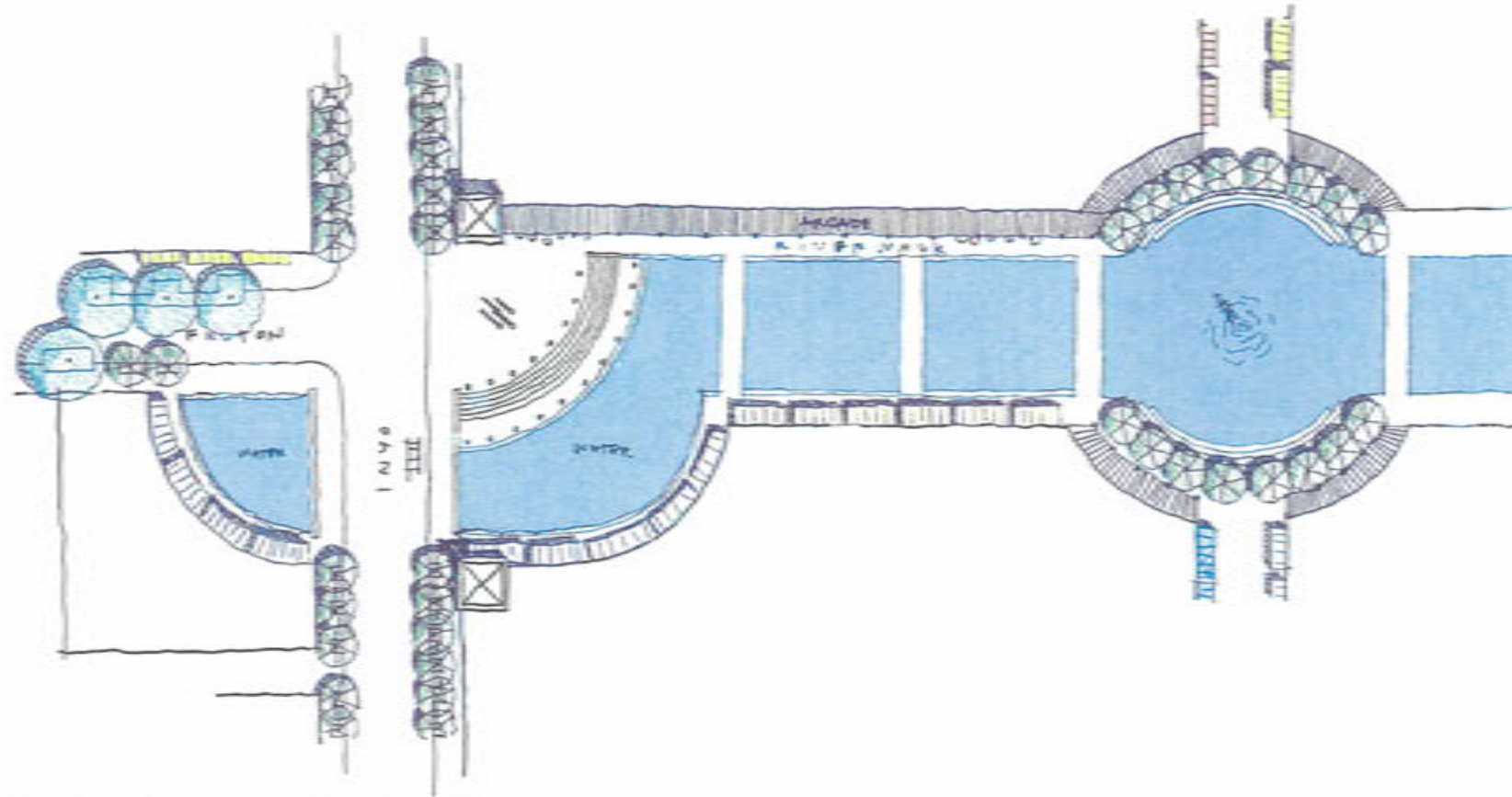
As the success of the Fulton Street District grows, trade-offs will be required between existing surface parking areas and development opportunities. New parking lots can be accommodated west of Broadway.



Existing Circulation and Parking Diagram



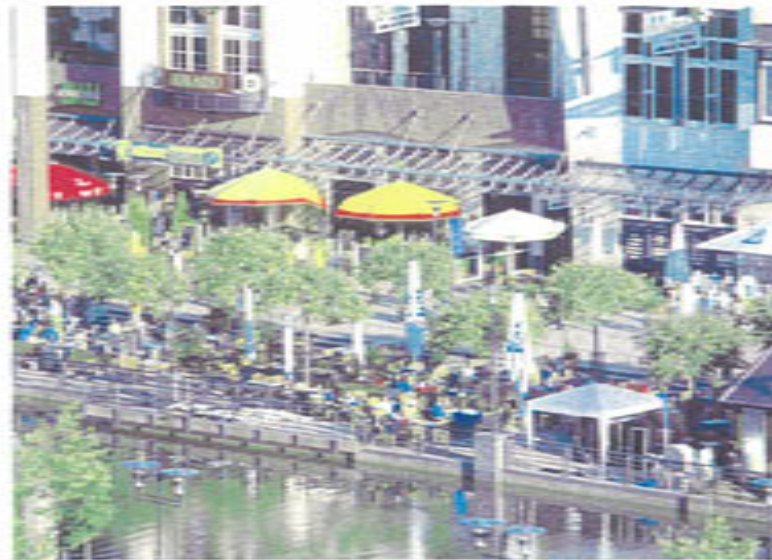
Development Opportunities and Proposed Circulation Map. North Broadway Diagonal and loop roads between Tuolumne and Fresno Streets are removed.



A series of water features will link Fulton Street north and south of Inyo.



Water-side dining.



Mixed-use development along the waterfront.

LINKS TO OTHER DISTRICTS

As part of Vision 2010, which addresses revitalization of the entire Central Area, the Fulton Street District must connect to adjacent revitalized neighborhoods. For these connections to work, each district must be established as a recognizable and sustainable destination.

A direct connection north to the **Uptown Arts District** is desirable. Once the loop road parallel to Tuolumne is removed, and planned attractions in both districts are in place, barriers between the two districts will largely be eliminated. It should be possible to park conveniently, enjoy museum and gallery offerings, then walk to the Fulton Street District for lunch and shopping, a movie, or dinner and a ballgame.

A link to planned new development south of Inyo will require more visual cues. The proposed **Riverwalk/Lake District** will feature a water theme. As envisioned, a riverwalk will extend south along Fulton, with an east-west tributary along Mono Street, and eventually flow into a five acre lake around Ventura Street. A series of special water features along Fulton Street can serve to introduce the new mixed-use development and strengthen ties between the two districts.

A strong connection north to the **Convention Center/Hotel District** along Kern Street is also needed to reconnect Fulton Street to the larger commercial area. New streetscape landscaping, amenities and lighting should emphasize and support a safe walk to and from the stadium. The presence of vehicular traffic on Fulton and east Kern can increase apparent activity and put more eyes on the street during the critical early years of revitalization. As the Main Street corridor restores its vitality, closing sections of the street to traffic with bollards can easily be accomplished. Pathways should also lead west to the Chinatown District, encouraging small retailers to begin to establish business in this historic quarter.



Fulton Street, reopened.

REOPENING FULTON STREET

"Providing a large amount of space devoted to only pedestrians does not create enough intensity of activity and exposure to support commercial uses." Advisory Services Panel Report of the Urban Land Institute, December 5-10, 1999

Reintroducing some vehicular traffic on Fulton Street has been promoted in several previous studies as a way to increase activity. Whatever the causes of pedestrian mall decline, most cities that have reopened their streets report economic improvement.¹ Eugene, Oregon opened one block of its pedestrian mall in 1985 and is now posed to open two more. Santa Monica, California waited 25 years to reopen its Third Street promenade to night-time traffic; this move caused the shopping center anchoring one end of the promenade to open up its blank north façade — recognizing the "street" it had ignored for ten years.² In Kalamazoo, Michigan, reopening the street attracted new tenants who were uninterested in a downtown location before.³

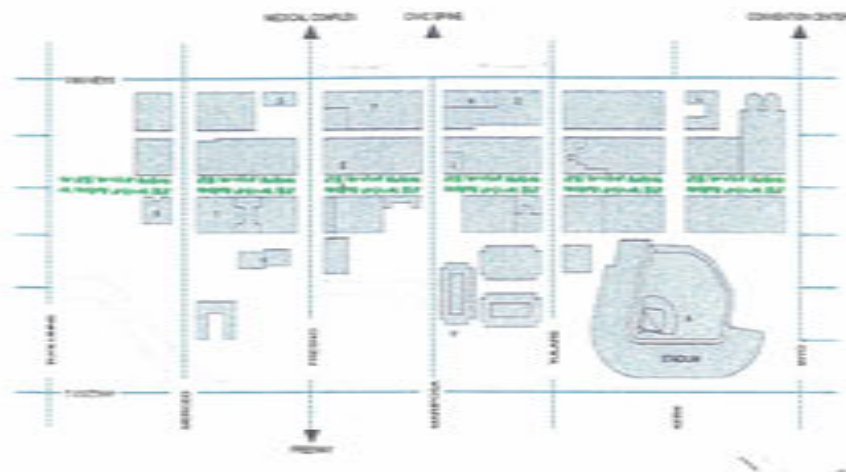
Like the creation of malls in the first place, their removal has been a source of revitalization. Residents are encouraged to drive back downtown, which encourages renovation of commercial establishments to attract an expanded shopping base, and building owners and developers are motivated to seek new tenants and a mixture of uses that will restore the vitality of downtown.

Market research conducted by Greg Stoffel & Associates found that the median income within a ten-minute driving radius of downtown Fulton Street is lower than average. Within a thirty-minute drive time, however, median income is high enough to support a revitalized retail entertainment district. According to Stoffel, visibility and access to storefronts provided by open streets will be essential for increased sales, higher priced goods, and new tenancies needed to boost the area economy.

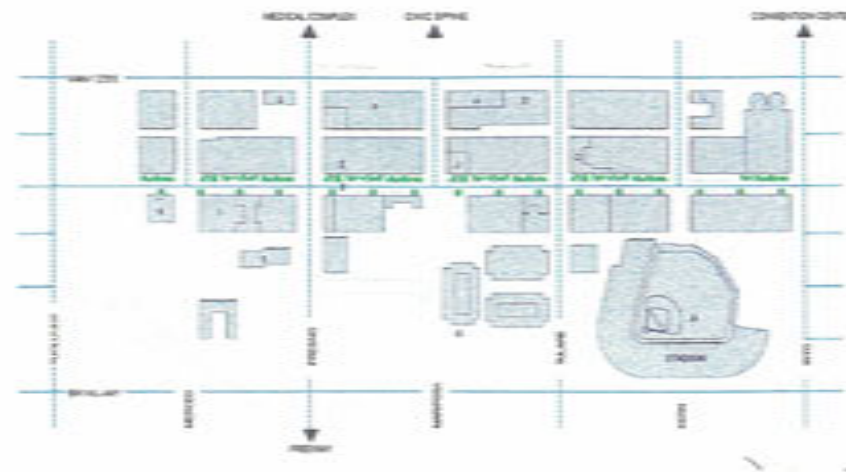
¹ Todd Bressic "Retrofits," Planning, June 1990.

² John McCloud "The Little Shops on Main Street," Planning, June 1990.

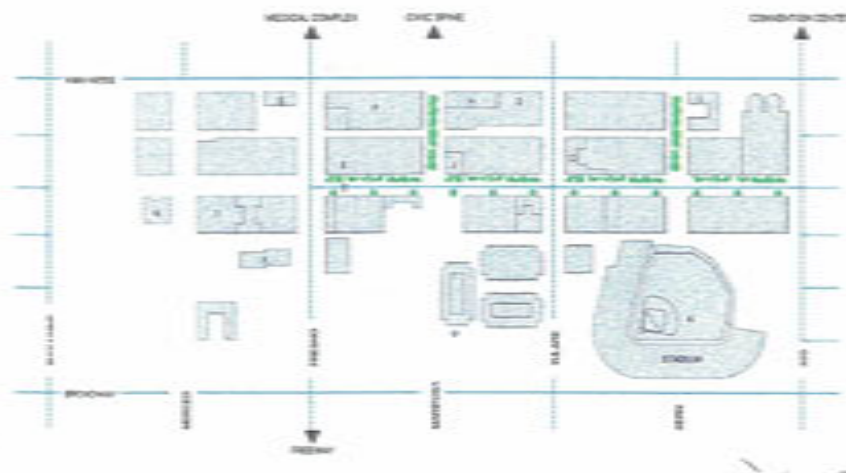
³ Conversation with Steven Deisler, Director Downtown Development and Planning, Kalamazoo, MI.



Option: All east-west roads are opened. North-south traffic remains closed on Fulton.



PREFERRED SCHEME: Fulton Street is opened to traffic from Tuolumne to Inyo. East-west traffic on Merced and Kern stops at Fulton Street.

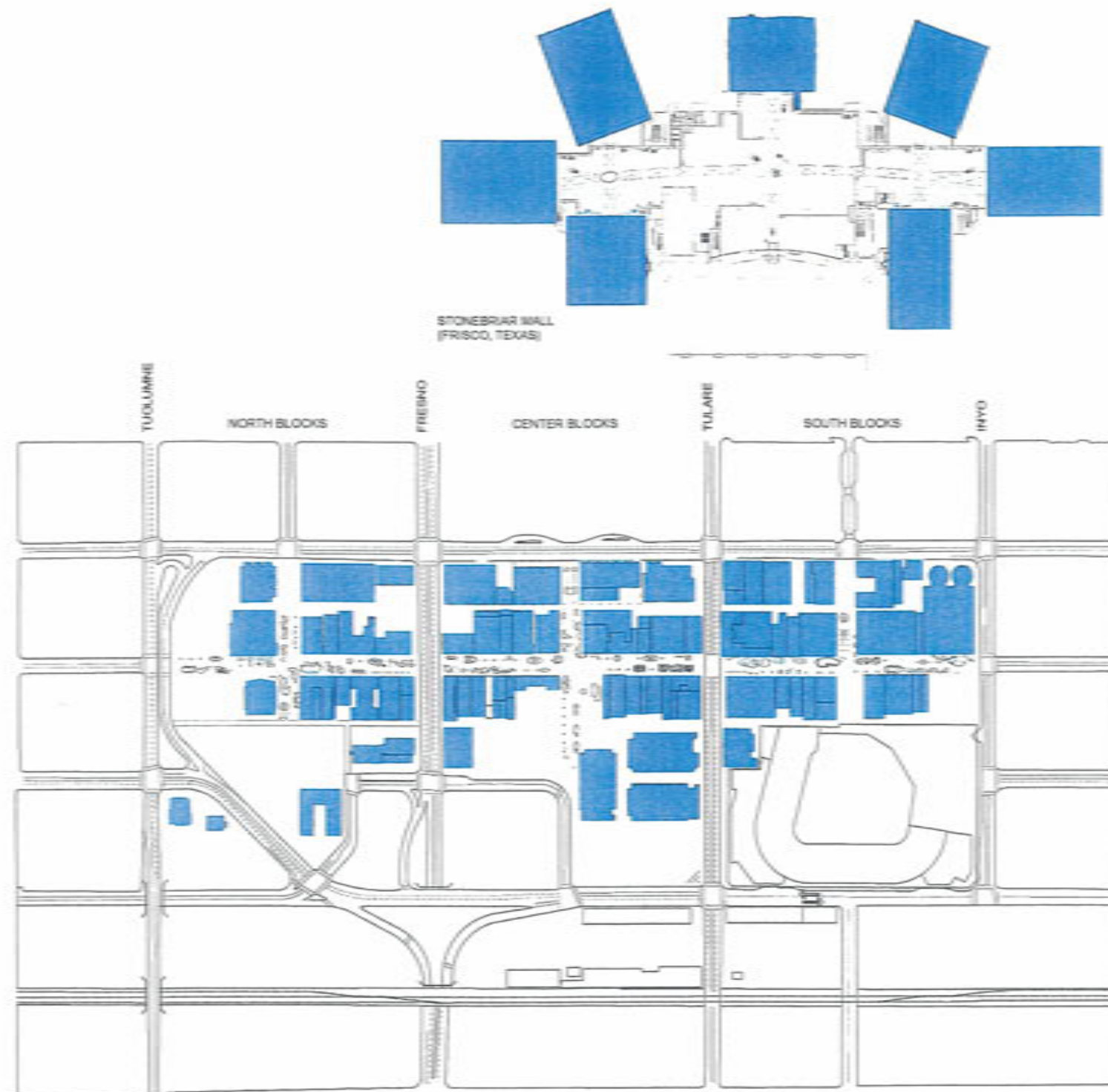


Option: The north blocks are closed to through traffic; Fulton Street is re-opened to traffic between Fresno and Inyo.

ELS explored many options for revising traffic circulation patterns to support Fulton Street businesses. These ranged from opening the length of the mall, to opening only the north and south sections of the mall, to opening all the east-west cross-streets instead. Three of the options, including the preferred scheme, are illustrated here.

Of the many configurations, the ELS team selected re-opening the entire Fulton Mall to traffic for the following reasons:

- Opening all six blocks of Fulton Street provides equal visibility and access to all commercial tenants
- Existing tenants require more visibility and some street parking to improve sales
- Existing pedestrian environment and streetscape amenities can be preserved and do not have to be sacrificed
- Based on market research, vehicular traffic will encourage more people to come downtown for shopping and entertainment, broadening the economic base
- Potential shoppers and diners will be able to experience the street first from the safety of their automobile
- New regional tenants will demand visibility for their storefronts
- Nighttime uses are desirable and will be encouraged by increased access and activity along the mall
- Traffic lanes can be closed for special events and festivals
- Connections to neighboring districts in all four directions will be strengthened by a continuous street grid
- Fulton Street has an historic legacy — as the heart of a downtown shopping and commercial district — which can be restored and promoted



Fulton Mall, 2600 +/- feet in length, is longer than large regional retail malls and too long to attract infill retail along its entire length.

LAND USE STRATEGIES

Study participants explored many potential land use strategies for locating new uses that will support Fulton Street merchants and property owners.

Some of the early schemes did not reflect current land use commitments, including the planned parking structure east of the Crest Theatre. Other schemes explored open spaces and new retail anchor tenants that would have required demolition of existing structures. Ultimately, these schemes were rejected in favor of new development that takes advantage of existing open space. In the design process, TAC members discussed new housing uses, a government or educational campus north of Fresno Street, the strategic location of a Farmers Market, and a potential new entertainment anchor as a second strong destination in support of the new downtown stadium.

A regional suburban retail mall, while often several stories high, will rarely exceed 1200 feet (roughly equivalent to four Fresno downtown blocks in length) encouraging shoppers to walk comfortably from end to end. At approximately 2600 feet in length, the existing six-block section of Fulton Street is too long to attract infill retail along its entire length, thus making it a marketplace retailing problem. Study participants reached consensus that shopping and entertainment uses should be concentrated on the four south blocks, while the north blocks take advantage of assembled land parcels for larger-scale development.

Four of the many land use concepts discussed are presented on the following page. Taking direction from the market research prepared by Greg Stoffel, ELS selected the preferred scheme because it incorporates both the development opportunities and the circulation requirements to restore economic vitality to the Fulton Street District. Strategic placement of the new entertainment anchor at the intersection of Fresno and Broadway will create a cluster of dining/entertainment/shopping uses located in close proximity to each other. A direct path to Fulton Street through the civic plaza will encourage pedestrian activity to expand throughout the district and not be limited to the immediate stadium environs.



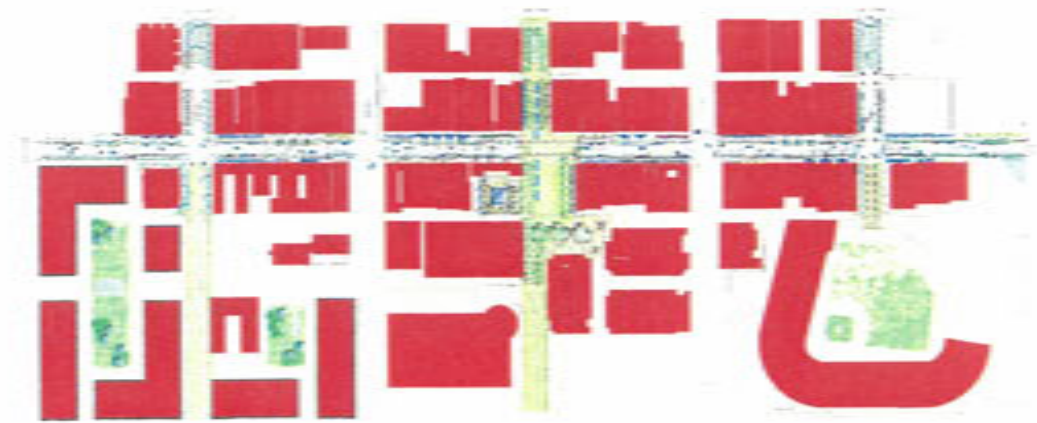
An early scheme showed a large market hall behind the Crest Theatre, housing on the north blocks and the civic plaza oriented north-south.



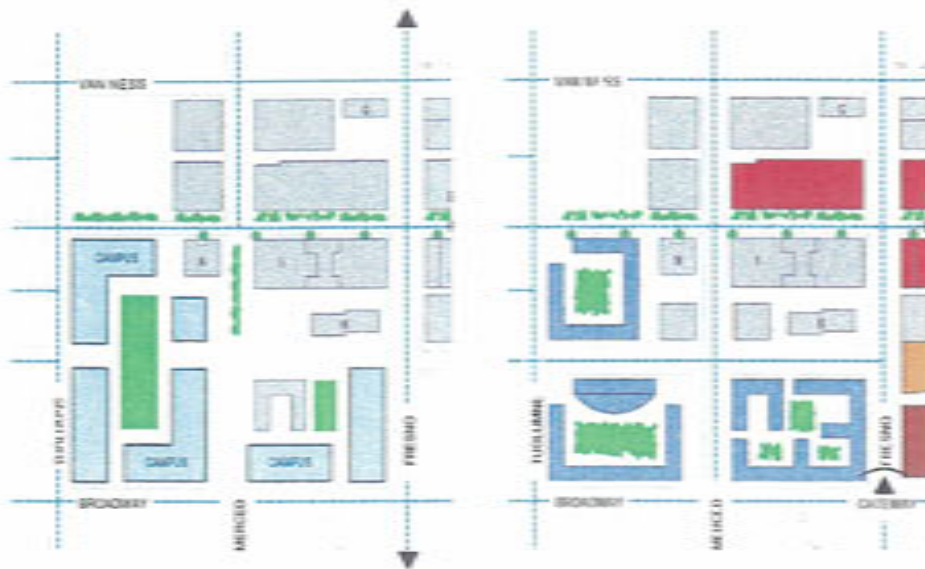
Another early scheme showed housing along Broadway, a government campus on the north blocks, and second level cinemas in front of the stadium.



A later scheme reoriented the planned INS parking structure east-west and placed a market hall behind it with the civic plaza oriented north-south.



PREFERRED SCHEME: A new entertainment anchor is located at Fresno and Broadway with a strong pedestrian link to Fulton Street through the expanded civic plaza. The north blocks are developed as a government or mixed-use campus.



Alternative campus approaches: the North Blocks are shown with a government or commercial campus (left) or multi-unit housing (right).

New government offices could occupy the North Blocks.



Examples of urban multi-unit housing

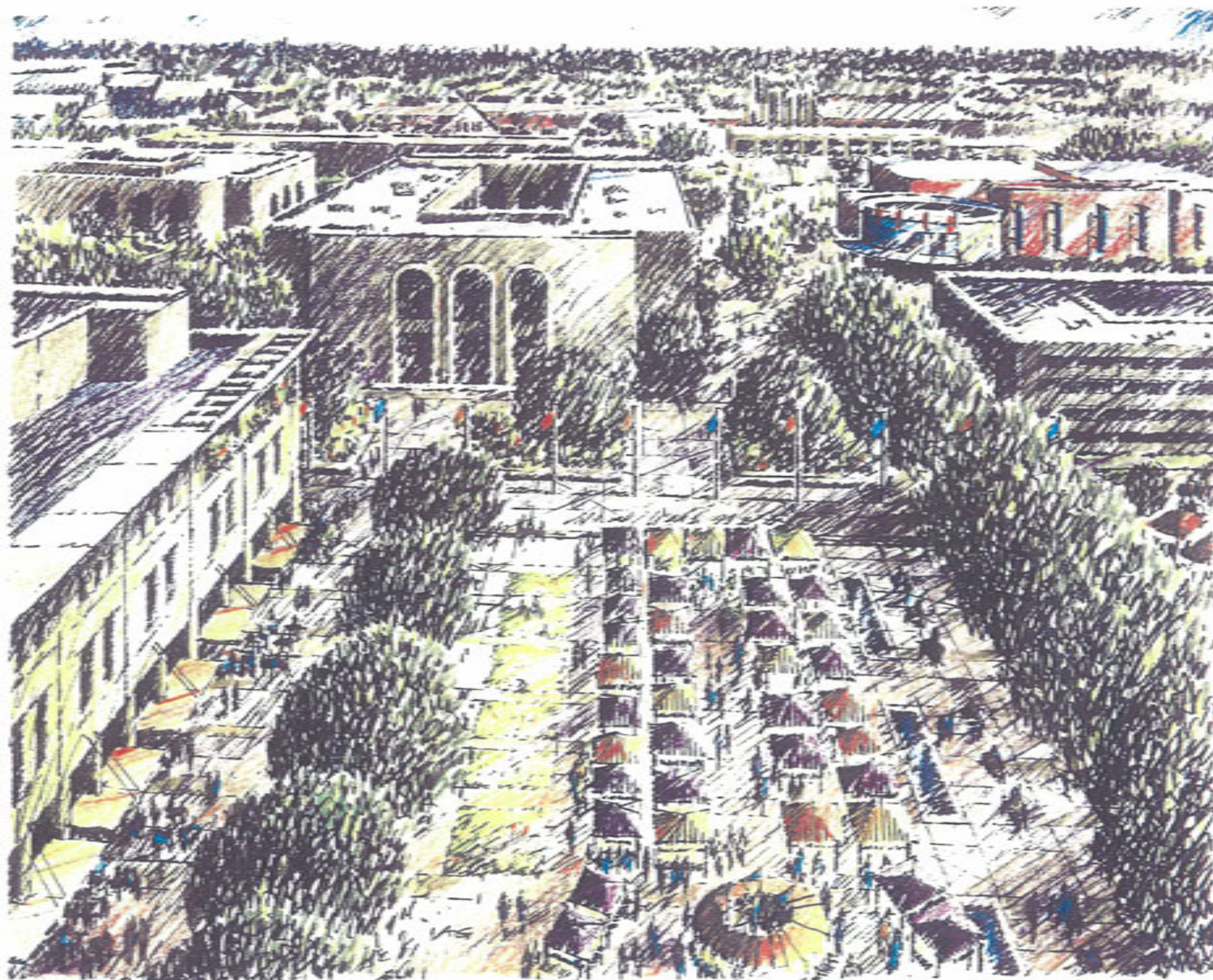
THREE SECTIONS

Cross-traffic on Fresno and Tulare Streets divides the six mall blocks into three distinct sections or superblocks. As early as 1989, studies suggested three different primary uses along the mall: an urban office park to the north; a mixed-use center; and an ethnic marketplace of shops, restaurants and entertainment uses between Tulare and Inyo.

The Fulton Street District will also divide comfortably into three recognizable sections. Such distinctions will help to keep the environment lively and pedestrian walks appealing, while coordinated streetscape amenities unite the whole.

North Blocks: Campus Development

The north blocks already house several governmental tenants. With loop roads and diagonal streets removed, land will be available for development of a new large-scale commercial or governmental campus, with shared green space. Alternatively, downtown multi-unit housing could be developed to support retail-office uses on the other two superblocks. Some well-established tenants, such as Longs Drugs, may choose to remain at this end of Fulton; other smaller retail establishments may relocate further south to take advantage of concentrated retail uses.



Mariposa Plaza. Aerial view of the new civic plaza, looking west, showing a Farmers Market in progress. The existing EOC building, new parking structure and proposed Cinema complex are visible in the background.

Center Blocks: Civic Gathering Place and Retail Expansion

As the center of downtown retail and entertainment, the Fulton Street District is the logical place for major civic gatherings. Through the years, festivals have been organized around Fulton Street, from the Raisin Day Festival of the early 1900s, to the many annual ethnic celebrations held today.

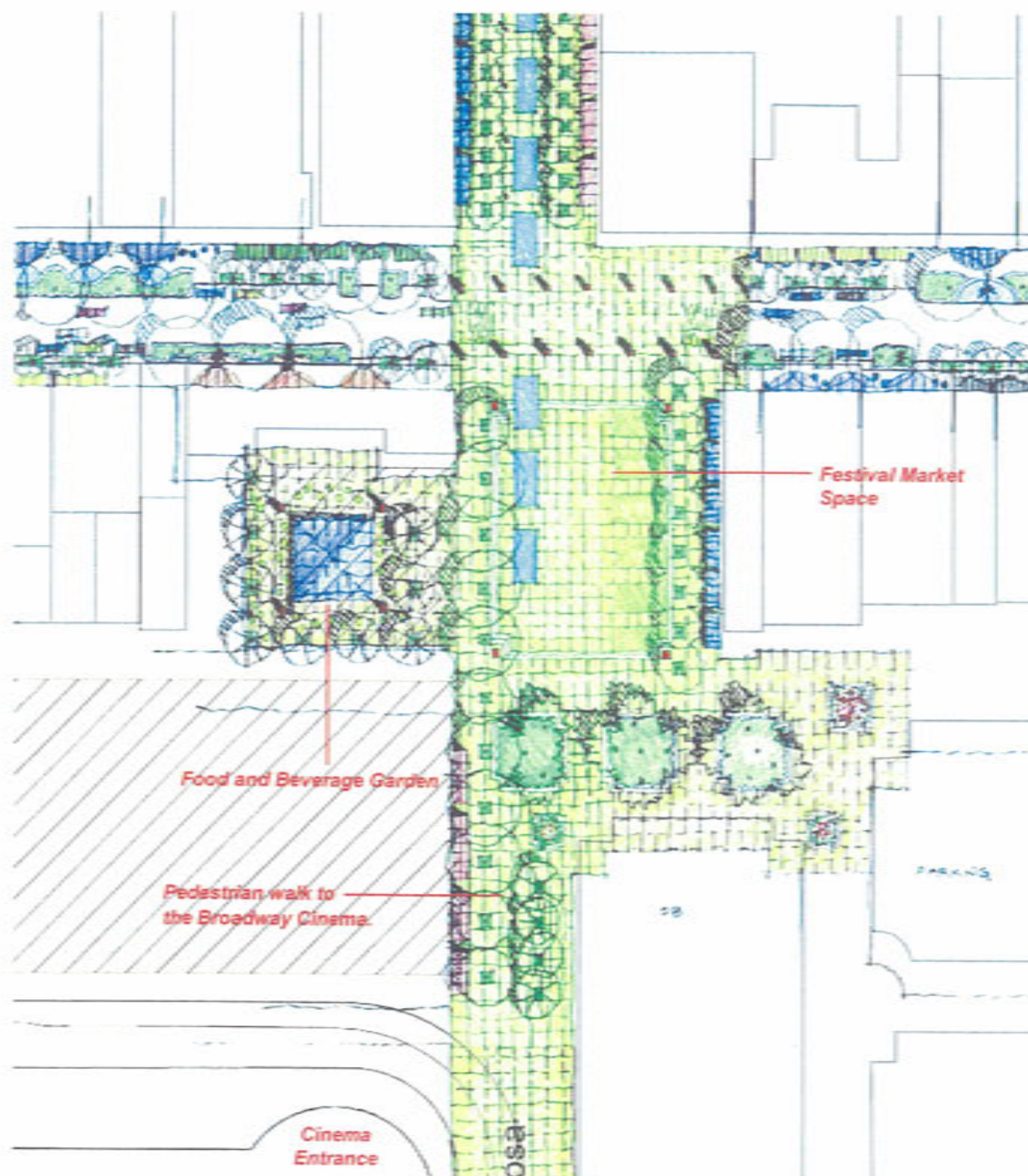
The concept design includes an enlarged and enhanced open plaza west of Fulton and Mariposa. The large clock tower currently marking the street intersection should be relocated or replaced with a new feature in the plaza. For special events, portions of Fulton can still be closed to traffic to accommodate parades or large crowds.

If Fulton Street remains closed to cars, north-south traffic connections will never fully develop and merchants may continue to struggle without visibility and access to the larger Fresno population. A larger concern is that new retail establishments will choose to locate outside the mall, isolating downtown Fulton Street from needed revitalization.

The Center Blocks are already experiencing some commercial redevelopment through the efforts of property owners and The Downtown Association. Two projects of note are the renovation of the Security Pacific Building for quality office and residential uses, and the renovation and re-leasing of the Guarantee Savings Building. Some of the government users in the south sector are also relocating here, in closer proximity to government uses on the north blocks. It is important that mixed use tenants and new infill retail be encouraged on these center blocks to balance expanding government use.



Mariposa Plaza could be the setting for banquets, music events, or market days.



Concept Plan for Mariposa Plaza: A major water feature will celebrate Fresno's heritage. Bollards can close Fulton Street for special events.

Mariposa Plaza

Providing historic office towers with a fittingly large civic plaza at their front door will benefit both private and public users. As a central events space, most of the plaza should be hardscape, with the opportunity to locate a food and beverage garden in a shaded square behind the Helms Building.

Located west of Fulton, the new plaza can incorporate available space between and behind several existing buildings. Pathways will connect Fulton Street merchants to Broadway Street. Buildings opening to the plaza should eventually add pedestrian arcades and shaded café seating for ground floor tenants. And a major water feature should celebrate Fresno's central role in the growth of the surrounding agricultural region.



Features of the plaza should include arcades along building edges, linear water features that may be covered over on large festival days, and food stalls on Market Days.

Vendors at the popular San Francisco Farmers Market, below.



Marketplace in Barcelona, Spain, above.

Farmers Market

The plaza should also be designed for an expanded Farmers Market several days a week. Nearby parking is available for vendors and shoppers. Demountable tent frames used in many cities can occupy the square on market days until the market outgrows this venue and seeks more permanent headquarters. An open market could also support some of the dry goods tenants that currently occupy the Gottschalk's department store building.

The presence of a Farmers Market in downtown Fresno goes back to the early 1900s. The 1992 Ratkovich study suggested a permanent Farmers Market at Eaton Plaza, at the base of Fresno's historic water tower. A separate uptown study suggested relocating the market to Fulton and Tuolumne. Each of these studies focused on the market as a destination, but neither used it to full advantage to energize an existing commercial/retail center. A Mariposa Market could be a popular destination in the center of the Fulton Street District.

A market located in Mariposa Plaza, can assist in the economic recovery and popular rediscovery of Fulton Street.





Glendale's Alex Theater.



San Jose's historic Fox California Movie Palace being restored by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency as the future home of Opera San Jose.



One can imagine the Crest Theatre fully restored for live theatre or art cinema. Patrons would enjoy nearby parking, and a direct connection through the civic plaza to Fulton Street shops and restaurants.

New Entertainment Anchor

With the Fresno Grizzlies providing 72 nighttime games and 37 additional entertainment events in their first year, a second anchor tenant is required to bring more users downtown, and to support expanded retail along Fulton Street between Fresno and Inyo. The civic plaza could link the major new anchor to Fulton Street. Of available properties, the parcel located at Fresno and Broadway is a highly recommended site for a cinema complex or other entertainment venue. Restoring the adjacent Crest Theatre could also create a larger entertainment cluster that, with the stadium, would restore nightlife to the Fulton Street District.



Proposed new cinema complex at the corner of Mariposa and Broadway as seen from Mariposa Plaza.





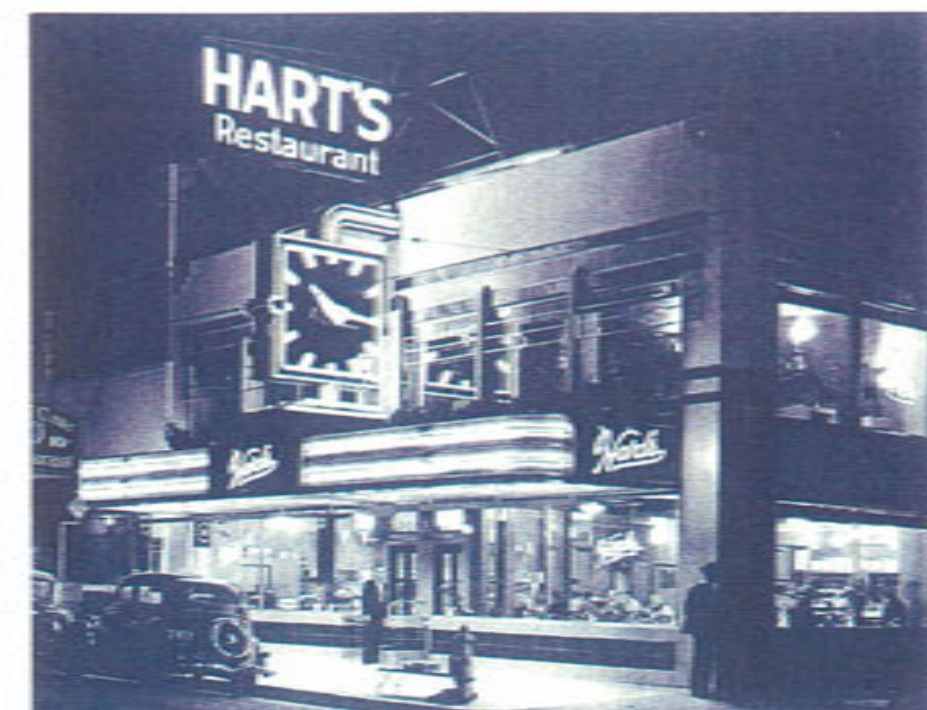
A water feature at the northwest corner of Fulton and Inyo could be a strong district attraction.

A variety of outdoor dining opportunities are illustrated above.

South Blocks: Dining and Entertainment

The new stadium offers a special, time-sensitive opportunity to establish new dining and entertainment uses in currently vacant or underutilized storefronts and department stores. Such compatible uses are necessary to jumpstart the economic revival of the Fulton Street District. Market research indicates that the first tenants to relocate will be local Fresno merchants willing to take a risk on their downtown. Regional tenants will be interested once a user base and marketing campaign are in place.

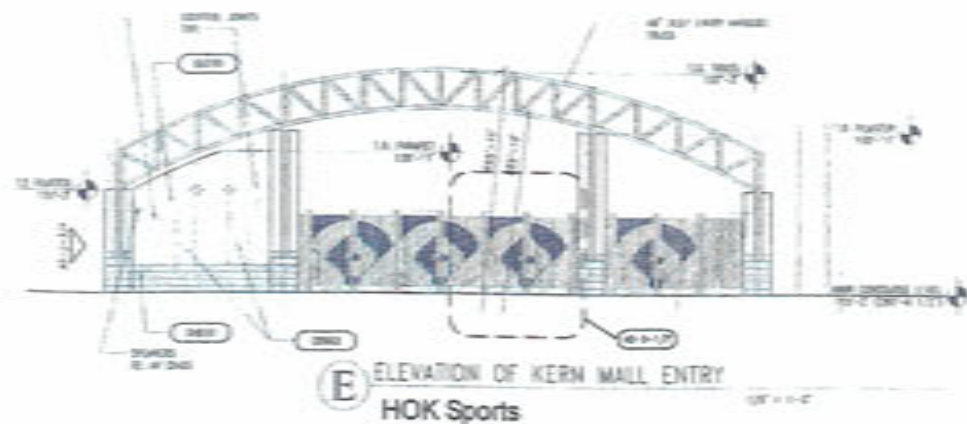
Many of the existing tenants are from Fresno's Hispanic community. Those with established clientele will benefit from new commercial interests bringing an expanded customer base and helping to introduce an expanded mix of ethnic restaurants. In November 2000, none of the dining or retail establishments in this area was open at night. With the stadium at Kern Street and a cinema complex at Mariposa, the Fulton Street District can once again support a variety of nighttime uses.



For decades, Hart's restaurant was a destination on Tulare east of Fulton.



After: Proposed streetscape improvements along Kern Street include paving, banners, landscaping, and outdoor seating.



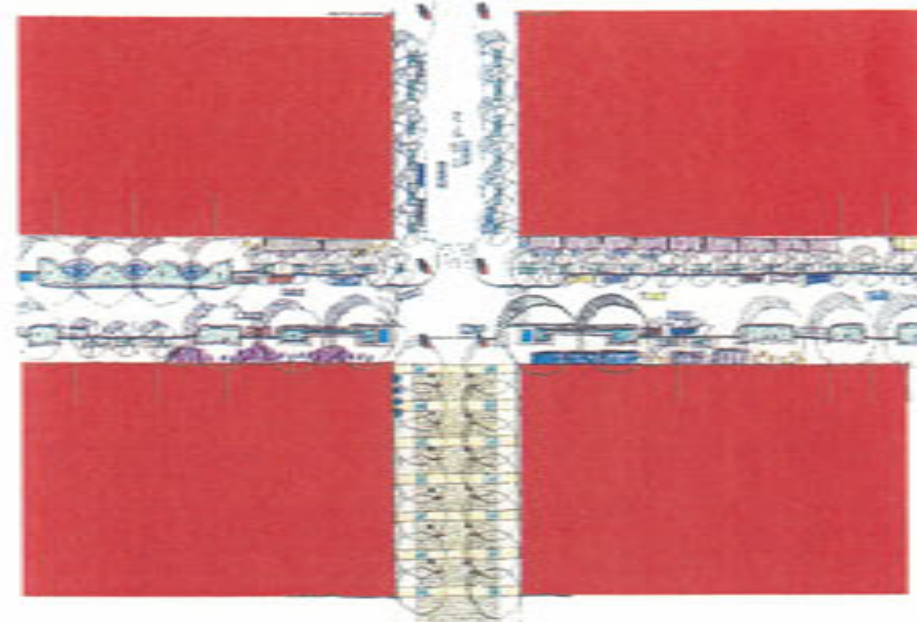
Before: Kern Street, 2001.



New banner graphic for Kern Street.

Downtown Stadium Connection

As one of the first streetscape improvements, RDA has targeted new amenities along the Kern Street entrance to the stadium. New paving, banners, landscaping, seating, and decorative lighting will make the block more inviting. This west portion of Kern Street should remain closed to vehicular traffic to accommodate pedestrians coming and going through the stadium's Kern Entry. Eventually, flanking water features and a signed gateway should announce the stadium from Fulton Street. And cafe tenants with outdoor seating should be encouraged.

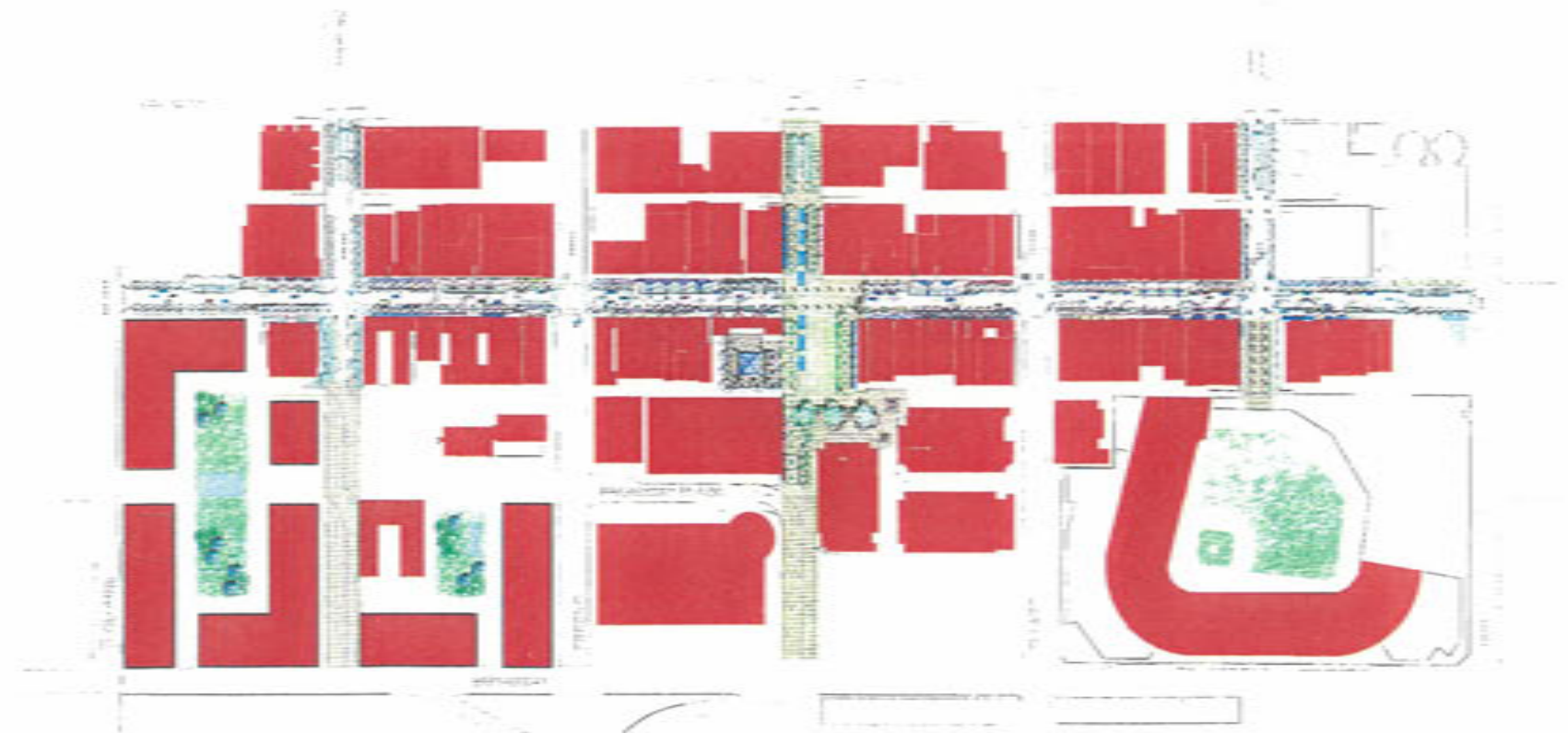


Plan at Kern Street entrance to the stadium.

Interior view of new stadium, looking north, with Fulton Street skyline beyond.



Rediscovering Fulton Street
Elements of the Streetscape





Before: Fulton Mall Today.



After: Revitalized Commercial Streets.

Reclaiming Fulton Street = restoring the strengths of the original commercial street while incorporating a full range of pedestrian amenities.

RECLAIMING FULTON STREET

Goal: To create a memorable destination.

The ELS Concept Plan reestablishes the downtown blocks of Fulton as "Main Street". The plan is to restore the economic strengths of the original commercial street, and at the same time incorporate a full range of pedestrian amenities. These include:

- Adaptive reuse of historic structures for mixed uses
- Wide sidewalks and crosswalks supporting pedestrian activities
- Mature street trees
- Water and art features, with links to other districts
- District Identity supported by graphics and signage which build upon local history
- Restricted traffic, with limited on-street parking and nearby offstreet parking
- Improved lighting including street lamps at pedestrian scale

There is recognition among urban planners that Main Streets can play a key role in "green" sustainable policies; i.e., a return to people living and working in close proximity to retail, and office and entertainment uses. Vehicular traffic can support the economic vitality of commercial interests and allow the center of the city to be rediscovered and shared by the larger city population.



Banners, building plaques, and sidewalk markers can celebrate the history of the Fulton Street District.



The Pacific Southwest Building opened in 1925 and was the tallest building in the valley for years.

Fresno Skyline, c. 1924.

LANDMARK BUILDINGS

Goals:

- To support rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of historic structures through zoning and permitting changes.
- To celebrate the architectural heritage of Fulton Street.
- To establish design criteria and sustainable design policies.

Fresno's first skyscraper, the Griffith-McKenzie Building, was completed in 1914; it still stands today at the corner of Mariposa and Fulton. A dozen more high-rises were constructed during the 1920s including Guarantee Savings (the Mattei Building), Security Pacific (the Pacific Southwest Building), the Bank of Italy Building, the T.W. Patterson Building, and the Radin-Kamp Department Store. Other quality retail establishments also grew along downtown Fulton Street: Gottschalk's opened in 1914; Zukor's opened in 1936; and J.J. Newberry's was built in 1937 (see map on following page).

To Fresno's credit, the historic buildings listed above still stand. They offer major assets for the revitalization of downtown Fulton Street including quality office space, retail frontages and ornamented lobbies.

With zoning, permitting, and tax structure changes, the City of Fresno can restore a healthy mixed-use environment, utilizing existing structures as a renewable resource. Diverse upper floor uses — including residential units and live-work space — will provide a broader economic base, offering needed support to the retail tenants who have maintained their commitment to Fulton Street over the years. At the same time, tenant design criteria are essential to establish and maintain quality storefront design.

As part of the landmark preservation effort, Fresno should consider adopting policies that promote sustainable, energy efficient design and rehabilitation. Creative engineering can maximize use of natural ventilation and day lighting — taking advantage of historic narrow floor plates and operable windows.





Landmark Building Locations on Fulton.

WIDE SIDEWALKS

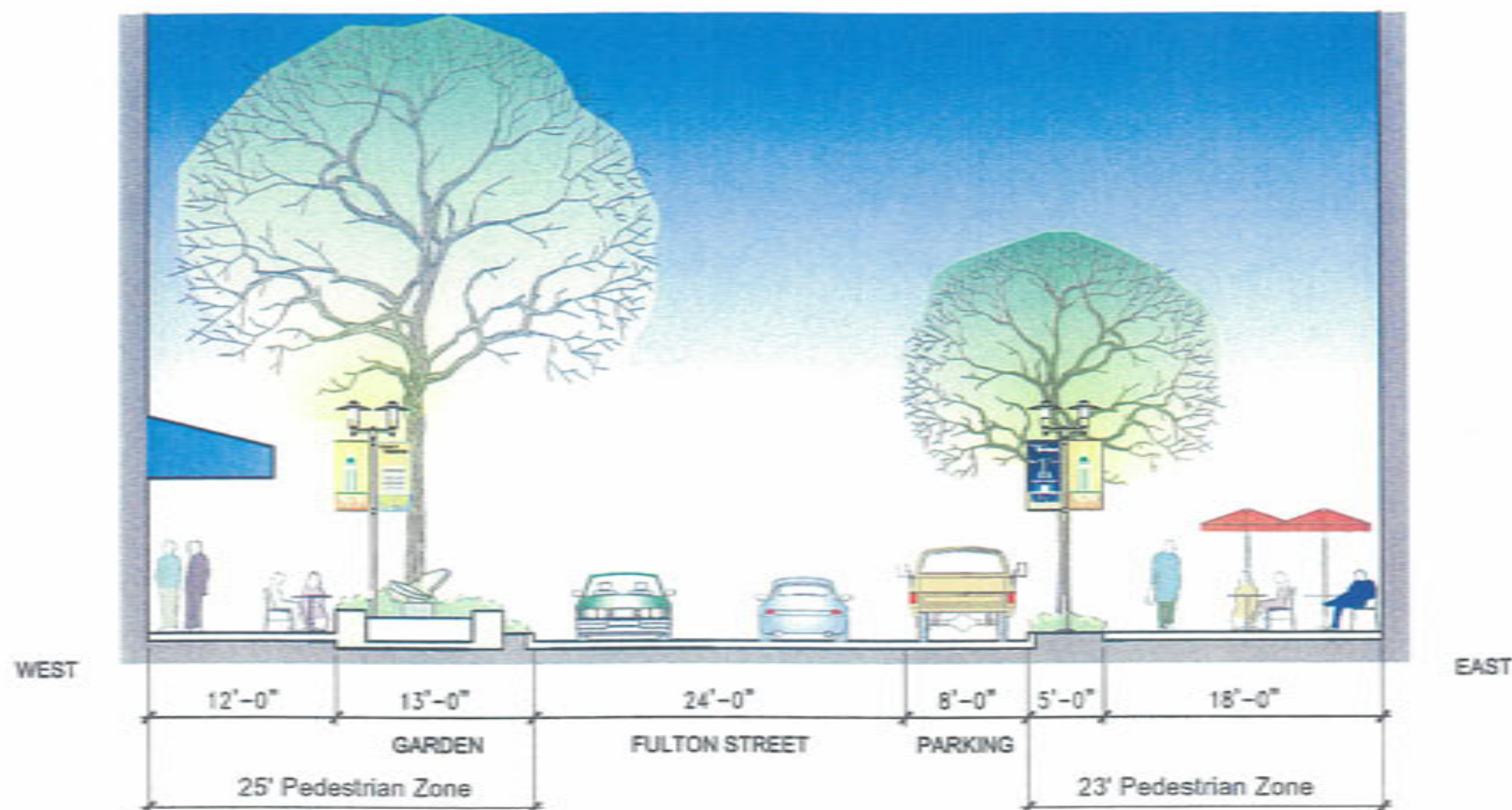
Goal: To preserve and support the pedestrian environment of Fulton Street.

There is unanimous agreement that Fulton Street should continue to have pedestrian character. Wide sidewalks can preserve existing trees and the art collection, and provide the desirable ambiance of a slow-paced shopping street.

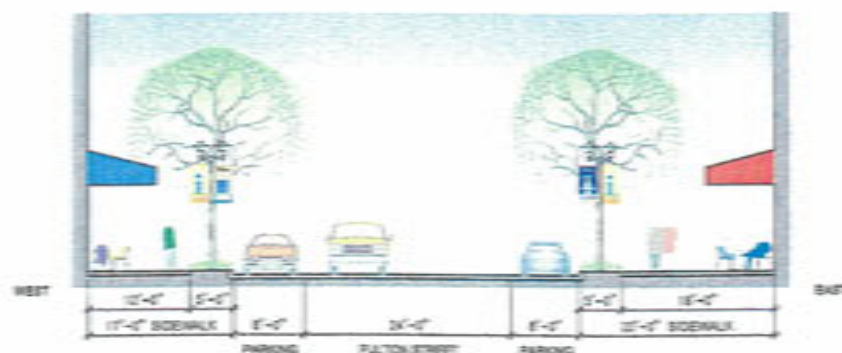
Vehicular traffic does not have to conflict with an attractive pedestrian environment. Limited curbside parking is desirable for those who find a space for a quick purchase or a meal. Placing people closer to storefronts can encourage sales. Amenities — such as outdoor seating, landscape and water features, and decorative lighting — can also be organized along the wide sidewalk frontages. At Santa Monica Promenade, reopening the street compelled tenants to address the street with improved signage and storefront designs, and encouraged new nighttime uses including cinemas and sidewalk cafes.

The typical right-of-way for Fulton Street is 80 feet wide. The roadbed will be shifted to center between existing trees, 37 feet from the west property lines and 43 feet from the east. Traffic will be limited to one 12 foot lane in either direction. Where parking is not provided, the sidewalks will be 25 feet wide on the west, and a full 31 feet on the east — ample for outdoor eating, strolling, and prominent art displays. Where 8-foot wide parking lanes are provided on each side, the minimum sidewalk width will still be generous at 17 feet on the west side, and 23 feet on the east.

The synergy that develops with well maintained storefronts, healthy landscaping, outdoor seating and the occasional art or water feature may be enhanced by visible commercial activity and convenient and accessible transportation. Prosperous streets reflect a sense of caring, a high level of maintenance, quality signage and storefront design, and carefully selected street furniture. These qualities in turn rely and build upon a sound economic base.

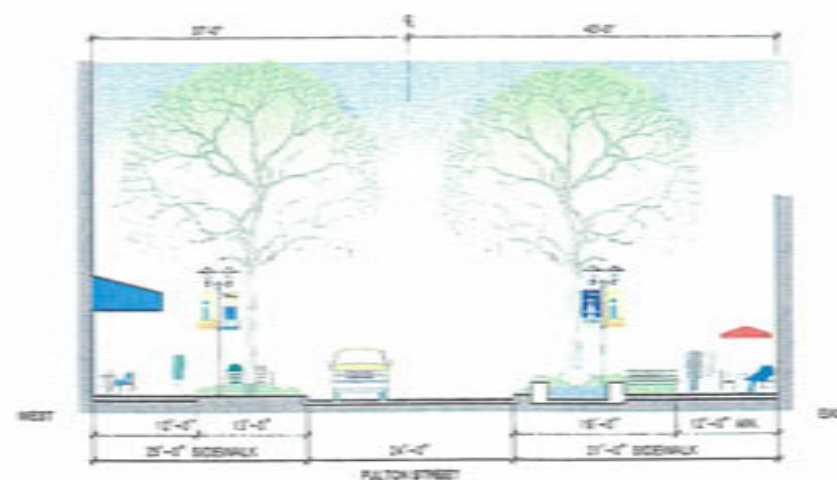


Section at existing and new tree with parking on one side.



Two rows of parking provides minimum sidewalk widths of 17' and 23'.

Proposed sections through Fulton Street.



Section at two existing trees with no parking provide maximum sidewalk widths of 25' and 31'.



Glazed tile bench back.



Dancing Waters, Stan Bitters – 1964.



Right of the Crane, Bruno Groth – 1964.



The Visit, Clement Renzi – 1965.

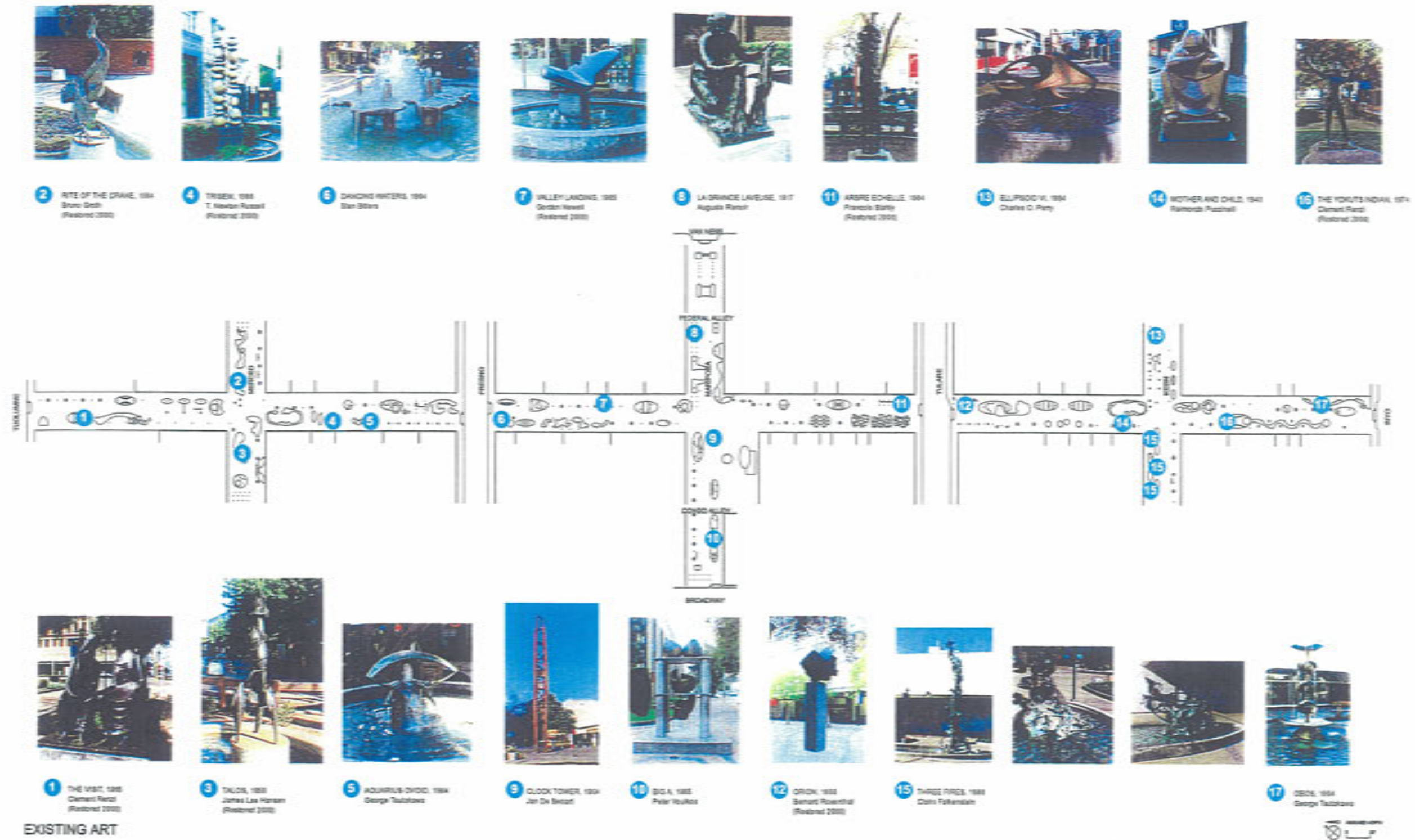
ART PROGRAM

Goal: To feature the restored art collection, working with a committee of Fresno artists and citizens on final placement of each piece.

Fulton Mall has a prestigious art collection comprised of sculptures, ceramic pipes in some of the water pools, and glazed tile bench backs. In 1998, The Downtown Association, in cooperation with the Department of Parks and Recreation and Council member Daniel Ronquillo's office, began a careful process of restoring each of these artworks.

There is unanimous agreement among study participants that this artwork should be preserved and featured in a way that encourages more public awareness and pride in the collection. All of the pieces should remain in the Fulton Street District. With the street open to vehicular traffic, many of the pieces could remain at or near their current locations. TAC members noted that many Fresno residents are unaware of or have not seen the wide breadth of the art collection. They discussed the possibility of grouping art more effectively for viewing or designing a sculpture court to feature several pieces.

Final placement of the art should be decided with a committee of dedicated artists and citizens, with each piece appropriately signed to identify the title, name of the artist, year of completion and year of restoration. This is a major legacy of downtown Fresno that should be carefully preserved for future generations. Several new commissions should also be planned for the Riverwalk/Lake District to the south.



Existing Art Locations.

SIGNAGE, GRAPHICS, AND STREET FURNITURE

Goal: To create a recognizable district and support way-finding

The Fulton Street District should be promoted as a destination. Banner graphics can establish a specific identity with typeface, wording, colors and imagery. The sense of place can be underscored with distinct street furniture, plaques naming historic buildings, street directories, and entrance monuments or gateways. Ways to locate and enjoy the art collection should be part of the identity program.

As the entire Central Area is revitalized, links to adjacent districts can be made with unified street lamps, directional signage, and a city-wide program of commercial street maps.

Mariposa Plaza may have a special signage and graphics program that recognizes the ethnic heritage of the City. Some cities use flags or sidewalk medallions to honor people or places of interest. Other cities have incorporated contributions from many citizens using signed paving blocks. It may also be desirable to distinguish sectors of the street, promoting the stadium at the south end, entertainment in the central blocks, and commerce or housing to the north.

Whatever the starting point, successful identity programs have built-in flexibility, allowing change to occur over time. They promote way-finding with consistent and recognizable signage for directions, parking, and places of interest. And they leave a lasting impression of a great place to visit.



Gateways, new and old; and historic poster art.



Existing bench.



Existing signage.



New bench concept.



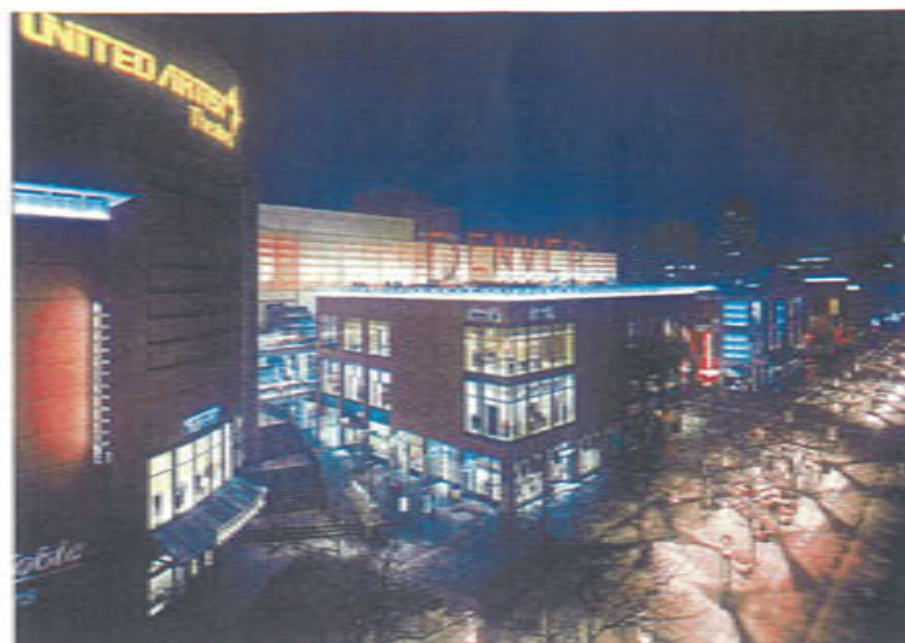
New colorful planters.



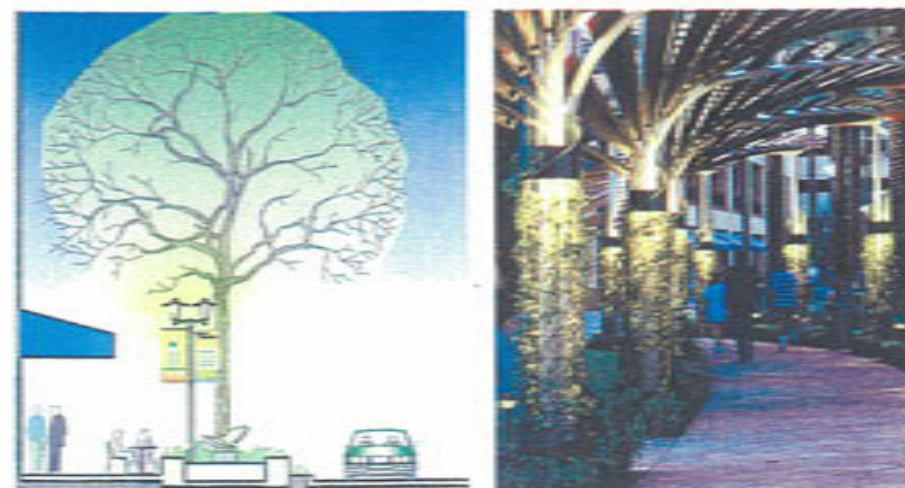
Early banner concepts by Deborah Nichols Design.



Preliminary typography for Fulton Street by Deborah Nichols Design.



Denver Pavilions designed by ELS.



Good lighting design can bring depth and drama to building facades accents and glow to retail shops, and sparkle to water and landscape features.

STREET LIGHTING

Goal: To create a safe and attractive nighttime environment

Lighting is one of the most effective tools for promoting commerce — with storefront signage, illuminated banners, and lampposts that provide a rhythmic beat to the nighttime streetscape. Special attention to good lighting design can transform the ordinary to an extraordinary streetscape.

New lampposts will provide one of the more obvious cues that Fulton Street has been revitalized — providing sufficient illumination along sidewalks to encourage nighttime shopping and eating and to support a district-wide banner program. Many commercial districts have installed low, 15-foot high light standards to create attractive, recognizable retail zones. Special lighting should define Mariposa Plaza, with sufficient foot-candles to allow safe passage at night. Standard high-powered light sources should still be used to illuminate intersections. Study participants also requested new signage regulations for the District to allow retail tenants greater flexibility and square foot area to promote their businesses.

Signature features of high-rise buildings can also be illuminated to promote the district from miles away and to add to nighttime entertainment.

Landscape lighting should be carefully placed to uplight mature trees, highlight water features and sculptures, and provide additional illumination near outdoor seating areas at night. Where required for way-finding, graphics for directories and parking may have reflective coatings or internal illumination.





Appealing window displays draw customers.



T.W. Patterson Building, Fulton Street.

BUILDING FRONTAGES

Goal: To establish design criteria that support district identity and raise quality standards

Many of the storefronts along Fulton Street require major facelifts, with improved shop entrances and display windows, repairs to damaged finishes, use of upgraded materials and detailing, and new signage. The Downtown Association has already established a baseline for new and renovated storefronts that should be implemented.

The historic facades provide a legacy of stone and plaster ornament, punched window openings, and cornice lines that define many great shopping streets and historic districts across the country. They are an integral part of the story to promote downtown Fresno.



Building facades can be adapted to include open eating areas at the ground floor, and quality new entrances and signage.

Active retail streets in Sunnyvale, Berkeley and Palo Alto, California, use street trees to demarcate the pedestrian zone. Cars in driving lanes do not detract from the walking and shopping experience under a canopy of shade trees.



Sunnyvale, California.



4th Street in Berkeley, California – vegetation at storefront and street edges.

MATURE TREES

Goal: To preserve the healthy mature shade trees along Fulton Street, working with the City of Fresno's certified arborists.

Fulton Street has benefited from the existence of healthy, mature trees. Considerable care was taken in the early sixties when new evergreen elms, magnolias, camphor trees and selected other specimens were planted along the six blocks of Fulton Mall. Root balls were placed in large excavated pits, protected in gravel beds and well irrigated. Newly planted trees were staked. As a result, most have grown into healthy, large trees providing desirable shade and amenity along the walkways.

By centering a restored roadbed midway between the main tree line on either side of Fulton, existing elms, camphors and podocarpus will continue to provide greenery and shade for pedestrians. Chinese tallow and magnolias will also contribute to the richly landscaped setting. Several trees in conflict with the roadway can be transplanted, among these, olive and prune trees

NEW STREET TREES AND LANDSCAPE

Goal: To add new street trees where a rhythm of planting beds and pedestrian amenity is desirable.

Successful "Main Streets" use street trees to demarcate the pedestrian zone, to enrich the walking experience, and to extend the shade canopy. Along Fulton, new infill trees may be added at the curb line without obstructing visibility to storefront windows and entrances. Planting beds will accommodate lower vegetation and seasonal color. The landscaped curb edge will also establish a secondary zone for seating, lampposts, water features and art. There are opportunities as well to add vegetation along the storefront edge, in freestanding pots or as vines on building columns or shade structures.

The Concept Plan shows a series of smaller shade trees at approximately 22-feet on center, spaced between the existing mature trees that will remain. The new trees will add to the recognition of a unique downtown commercial district where shopping, eating and entertainment are available.

Existing Trees on Fulton Street.



Palo Alto, California.

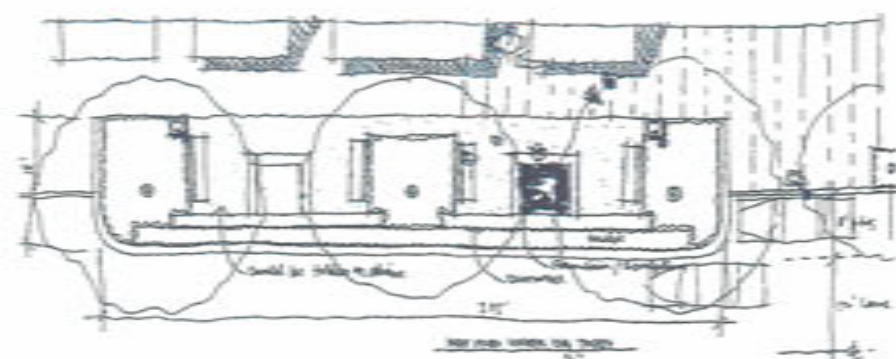




Existing trees to remain on Fulton Mall. Several olives, magnolia and plum trees are shown relocated to Merced.



Water can be a sight, sound, and cooling element.



Plan sketch of secondary water feature.

The Concept Plan shows a significant water feature at each of the six blocks, with a secondary landscape feature that may also include water.



Existing water features along Fulton Street.



WATER FEATURES

Goal: To provide a series of water features along downtown Fulton Street.

The architects for the Fulton Mall recognized the value of water as a pleasing sight, sound, and cooling element in the Valley climate. In the early 1960s, twenty different water sources were installed; many of these became the settings for the sculpture collection.

There is unanimous agreement that water features should continue to be a part of the Fulton Street District. The Concept Plan shows a water feature at each of the six blocks, with a secondary landscape feature that may also include a water element. These are conceptual in nature and will be designed in concert with the art program and pedestrian streetscape.

As the Concept Plan is further developed, a major new water feature may anchor each third of the existing mall: one at Mariposa Plaza, one near the Tuolumne entrance to downtown Fulton Street, and one near Inyo, which may be linked to the water systems of a future mixed use development to the south. Sculptures which require water as part of their expression will be integrated with the water features. Existing fountains should be researched to determine which features are integral to the sculptural art.



APPENDIX A – MEETING MINUTES

Meeting One – June 6, 2001

TAC members identified the following existing conditions at Fulton Mall:

- Perception that the Mall is unsafe at night
- Northern Fresno residents and college kids do not come downtown
- Weak retail business climate
- Slowly improving office vacancy rates
- Ballpark was strategically located downtown to stimulate renewed interest in the area
- Parking is essential
- New street lighting required
- Improved maintenance required
- Quality amenities required
- New, quality storefronts required to support hotel and convention visitors
- Attractive signage needed to announce retailers and parking locations
- Funding required for façade restoration
- Planning codes need to support live-work, revise signage, and outdoor seating
- Competition perceived to come from existing traditional malls and the Tower District
- Opinions about traffic patterns ranged from opening the entire mall, opening sections of the mall, to leaving the mall closed and having a shuttle bus system

Meeting Two – July 12, 2001

Preliminary demographic information from Greg Stoffel and Associates (GSA) showed 310,000 people residing within 3 miles of the mall with an average annual household income of \$29,000. To support a healthy mix of successful retail tenants, Fulton Street will have to draw from a 30-minute driving radius with households having a higher income average. Greg Stoffel's market research also suggested that vehicular traffic along Fulton will be necessary to attract new retail tenants who demand store visibility.

The likelihood of a cinema anchor tenant locating downtown was revisited, having been considered several years previous. GSA's review of the local market indicated that a 16-screen cinema could be supported at a downtown location because of the changing economics in the cinema industry and the presence of the new downtown stadium as another main anchor.

ELS presented many circulation schemes and preliminary land use schemes for discussion, several of which are illustrated in this report. TAC members liked the idea of concentrating retail entertainment uses in the southern portion of the existing mall, allowing the two northern blocks to be used as an integrated campus for housing, government, commercial or even educational uses. ELS emphasized the need to concentrate uses by showing a site plan for a regional shopping mall that approximated the size of two of the superblocks. Land Use Scheme 4 received the most approval, with a new entertainment anchor, farmer's market and prominent civic square sharing the superblock west of Fulton Street, between Fresno and Tulare.

Meeting Three – August 1, 2001

Barry Elbasani explained that the ELS team and the Fresno Redevelopment Agency are, in effect, exploring a second revitalization for Fulton Street, 35 years after the pedestrian mall provided the first revitalization experience. Greg Stoffel stated that a successful revitalization effort requires a mix, a reason and a story: a mix of tenants, a reason to go downtown, and a story about why new tenants should locate in this downtown.

Circulation and land use diagrams were reviewed in more detail. Participants discussed the need for affordable, accessible parking; preservation of existing art and trees; and the pros and cons of re-opening the street to vehicular traffic. Greg Stoffel stated that office workers will spend money at lunchtime but overall sales are dependent on the demographics of the surrounding area, which, in the case of Fulton Mall, requires a larger draw than the typical 10-mile driving circumference to obtain a sufficient economic base for strong retail sales. He emphasized that merchants need vehicular traffic on Fulton Street for exposure and shopper convenience, and Fresno residents need to drive through to rediscover their downtown. He also noted that national retailers will require vehicular traffic for market exposure and will not be persuaded by free rent if they do not believe they can make their sales target in a market. Barry Elbasani stated that once the commercial draw is strengthened, people will come.



Fulton Mall, 2001.

Tulare Street, 2001.



APPENDIX B – A PARTIAL HISTORY OF FULTON STREET REVITALIZATION

- **March 1961:** Central Business District (CBD) Redevelopment Project Area established.
- **September 1964:** Fulton Mall opened with new paving, fountains, sculptures, clock tower, and landscaping. The economic success was short-lived as department stores continued to move out, and Fashion Fair mall opened in 1969.
- **July 1989:** The Development Department for the City of Fresno issued the "Central Area Community Plan Summary". The summary described a 400-page report developed by City staff and the Central Area Planning Task Force over a period of three years, with the goal of creating "an inspiring environment conducive to new investments and economic growth." "Special attention was given to the problems of the Fulton Mall District...."
- **October 1992:** The Central Area Urban Design Strategy Final Plan prepared by the Ratkovich Company and Ehrenkrantz and Eckstut Architects. This study proposed reopening the northern two blocks to traffic and retaining the southern blocks as an updated "casual" mall. This plan also proposed reconfigurations of downtown traffic, creation of an Uptown Arts District which is being pursued, and relocation of the stadium to its present downtown location adjacent to Fulton Mall.
- **1995:** The Downtown Association (DTA) recommended reopening portions of Fulton Street and, with the Fresno Redevelopment Agency, was successful in their application to have Fulton Mall accepted into the State Main Street Program.
- **December 1999:** At the urging of the Downtown Revitalization Task Force of the Fresno City and County Chamber of Commerce, a panel of professionals convened by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) spent one week in an intensive review of the commercial downtown district assessing future options. The core of the study area was the Fulton Mall. In their review, the ULI panel noted that "The City has developed several plans for the mall area's revitalization; however, lack of both consensus and a comprehensive marketing program have left this core area vacant and without an identity."
- **May 2001:** The Fresno Redevelopment Agency commissioned ELS to provide retail market analysis and design review of Fulton Mall, and to prepare a concept design aimed at economic and physical revitalization of downtown Fulton Street.
- **September 2001:** The 3RC (Review, Research, and Recommendation Committee), formed in July, 2001 to advise the Downtown Implementation Team (DIT) issues an advisory report calling for "a major cleanup of Fulton Mall," and "major enhancements to encourage greater utilization and create an attractive destination." The urgent focus of the report was the opening of the new downtown stadium slated for late spring 2002.
- **January 2002:** The DTA reaffirmed their support to reopen the length of Fulton Mall.

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| p. 2 | Fulton Street (down center) | <i>The Heart of Our Cities</i> | Fresno Bee Editorial Library |
| p. 6 | SF Floral Company | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p. 75 | Fresno Historical Society Archives |
| p. 7 | Fulton St. 1915 | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p. 67 | Fresno County Free Library Photograph Archives |
| p. 7 | Shaded Sidewalks | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p. 50 | Fresno County Free Library Photograph Archives |
| p. 7 | Mariposa Looking West | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p. 51 | Fresno Historical Society Archives |
| p. 7 | Pacific Southwest Building | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p.110 | Fresno Bee Editorial Library |
| p. 8 | Fulton Christmas | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p.150 | Fresno Bee Editorial Library |
| p. 8 | Fulton Mall, 1965 | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p.157 | Courtesy of Don McKenzie, Fresno Neon Collection. |
| p. 26 | Hart's Restaurant | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p.133 | Fresno Historical Society Archives |
| p. 30 | Pacific Southwest Bldg | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p.109 | Fresno Bee Editorial Library |
| p. 30 | Fresno Skyline | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p.108 | Fresno Historical Society Archives |
| p. 35 | Raisin Gate | <i>A Portrait of Fresno</i> p. 65 | Fresno Bee order #HLA 102 |
| p. 35 | Fresno Gate | <i>Fresno History at a Glance</i> | |